

ATTENTION: NPS extended the public comment period through December 22, 2017.

COMMERCIAL TOUR REQUIREMENTS AND FEES Q&A

Q. What exactly is a CUA?

A. A commercial use authorization (CUA) allows an individual, group, company, or other for-profit entity to conduct commercial activities and provide specific visitor services within a national park unit. The National Park Service issues CUAs to manage a wide-range of commercial visitor services in addition to road-based commercial tours. Depending on the park, this can include guided mountaineering and backpacking, bike tours, kayak trips, photography workshops, scuba diving classes, fishing trips, and much more.

Q. Why does NPS require CUAs?

It is illegal to conduct business in a park area without a permit, contract, or other written agreement. The requirement is in 36 CFR 5.3. Additionally, Public Law 105-391 Section 418, passed in 1998, provides NPS the authority to issue CUAs to allow business operations and requires NPS to collect a reasonable fee for CUA administration and management.

Q. How does the National Park Service define a road-based commercial tour operator?

A. We define road-based commercial tours as one or more persons traveling on an improved roadway on an itinerary that a company or individual has packaged, priced, or sold for leisure/recreational purposes. Road-based commercial tours provide no other visitor services except those incidental to road-based travel in an NPS unit (on-board interpretation and information, and incidental stops at visitor centers, restaurants, wayside exhibits, etc.).

Q. Who needs to acquire the CUA — the tour operator or the motorcoach company?

A. One or the other, but not both. The responsibility for obtaining a CUA will fall on the company that packaged, priced, and sold the tour. A transportation company would only need a CUA if it also packaged, priced, and sold tours directly to consumers. There will likely be exceptions to this rule. For example, it may be impractical to enforce CUA requirements on foreign-based tour companies, in which case the domestic transportation company may need to obtain a CUA. All commercial vehicles will continue to pay the commercial entrance fee even if they are not required to have a CUA.

Q. Why does the National Park Service charge commercial entrance fees?

A. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 amended the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 by requiring the Secretary of Interior to establish a commercial tour fee "...to be imposed on each vehicle entering (each unit of the National Park Service for which an entrance fee is charged) for the purpose of providing commercial tour services within the unit." The NPS has not updated the commercial tour entrance fee schedule since implementation in 1998.

Q. What are the proposed new entrance fees?

A. Beginning May 1, 2019 all parks that have a vehicle entrance rate will charge the commercial tour entrance fees based upon the most recent Commercial Vehicle Fee Schedule below. Parks that have a per person entrance rate only will charge the per person fee.

Entrance Group	Sedan Rate (1-6)	Van (7-15)	Mini Bus (16-25)	Motor Coach (26-56)	NEW Motor Coach (57+)
1	\$40	\$60	\$110	\$150	\$220
2	\$50	\$85	\$160	\$225	\$325
3	\$60	\$110	\$190	\$300	\$450
4	\$80	\$185	\$300	\$450	\$600

Q. What is peak season pricing?

A. It is proposed that 17 national parks will charge an increased commercial entrance fee for five consecutive months during their busiest time of the year.

Q. Which parks are considering the implementation of peak season pricing?

- May-September
 - Arches National Park (ARCH)
 - Bryce Canyon National Park (BRCA)
 - Canyonlands National Park (CANY)
 - Denali National Park (DENA)
 - Glacier National Park (GLAC)
 - Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA)
 - Grand Teton National Park (GRTE)
 - Olympic National Park (OLYM)
 - Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)
 - Yellowstone National Park (YELL)
 - Yosemite National Park (YOSE)
 - Zion National Park (ZION)
- June-October
 - Acadia National Park (ACAD)
 - Mount Rainier National Park (MORA)
 - Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO)
 - Shenandoah National Park (SHEN)
- January-May
 - Joshua Tree National Park (JOTR)

Q. Why were these parks chosen?

A. These 17 parks are the top revenue producing parks. They collect 70% of the total entrance fees collected throughout the country.

Q. What are the proposed peak season commercial tour entrance fees?

A. We are proposing the following peak season commercial tour entrance fees:

Entrance Group	Sedan Rate (1-6)	Van (7-15)	Mini Bus (16-25)	Motor Coach (26-56)	NEW Motor Coach (57+)
3	\$160	\$370	\$600	\$900	\$1200
4	\$160	\$370	\$600	\$900	\$1200

Q. Why are tier 3 and tier 4 parks the same price?

A. The proposed high season price schedule is consistent across parks included in the seasonal pricing pilot in order to keep the changes as simple as possible, making it easier for commercial operators to know what to expect as they plan their itineraries.

Q. Why are the entrance fees increasing?

A. This proposal would help address the deferred maintenance backlog in national parks across the country and improve the visitor experience in parks.

Q. Where will the money go?

A. All of the money will benefit the National Park Service. CUA fees stay within the collecting park and are used to recover CUA program costs and help fund visitor experience improvement projects. 80% of the entrance fees will remain in the park where it is collected. NPS will spend the other 20% on projects in other national parks. The new revenue from the fee increases will be used to provide enhanced visitor services, including repair and maintenance of facilities, capital improvements, enhanced amenities, resource protection and additional visitor programs and services. There will be an emphasis on deferred maintenance projects.

Q. How can commercial tour operators view and comment on the proposed standards?

A. The proposal is available through November 23, 2017 on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment site at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/commercialtourrequirements>.

Q. Is NPS planning to implement peak season pricing for private users?

A. The NPS is also proposing private non-commercial seasonal entrance fee rates. Proposal information and a public comment forum is available from October 24, 2017 to November 23, 2017 on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/proposedpeakseasonfeerates>.